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SUBJECT: ISRAELI READOUT ON LIVNI-ABBAS MEETING

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz; Reasons: 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's chief of staff, Jakub "Yaki" Dayan, told the Charge May 23 that the GOI's meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas on May 21 in Sharm el-Sheikh does not represent a change in Israel's view of Abbas. The GOI nevertheless maintains low-level contacts with his office, recognizes the importance of "some sort of dialogue" with him, and has tentative plans for PM Olmert to see Abbas in June. Dayan said Livni had told Abbas that he should concentrate on a provisional state instead of on broader final status issues. Dayan reported that Livni had reiterated the GOI's willingness to address humanitarian issues, but that neither side raised specifics. He said the Egyptians had in a separate meeting expressed a willingness to transfer weapons and ammunition to Abbas. End summary.

GOI View of Abbas, Contacts with His Office, and Next Steps

¶2. (C) Dayan said the most important aspect of the meeting between Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Livni, and Abbas -- which had only been approved on May 19 -- is that it had taken place at all. Despite what he described as a "good" atmosphere at the meeting, Dayan insisted that it does not represent any change in FM Livni's view of Abbas. Dayan reiterated that the GOI does not doubt that Abbas means well, but still questions his ability to take steps he had failed to take when Fatah was in power. Dayan said Livni sees Abbas as "an address, not a channel."

¶3. (C) Dayan admitted that the GOI recognizes "the need to maintain some sort of dialogue" with Abbas and continues "a low level of cooperation" with his officials. He revealed that the PA and GOI continue to coordinate on crossings and arrangements for Palestinians requiring medical care in Israel. Such contacts had allowed the rapid transfer to Tel Aviv of General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) Chief Tariq Abu Rajab, who was severely injured May 20 during an assassination attempt in Gaza.

¶4. (C) Dayan said Livni told Abbas that it would be important to agree on what discussions would cover "if we talk" about substantive issues in the future. According to Dayan, Livni and Abbas had a "philosophical discussion" about the second phase of the Roadmap, during which Abbas supported an international conference but was less enthusiastic about Livni's suggestions that the Palestinians accept a provisional state and move forward from there. Dayan claimed Abbas had admitted that "currently I don't have a plan." Dayan also complained that Abbas had contradicted himself repeatedly.

¶5. (C) Dayan claimed that the Palestinians had made their desire for additional meetings clear. He said that PM Olmert would visit Egypt next, but that additional steps would be contingent upon the outcome of Olmert's visit to Washington. While one of these steps would be an Olmert-Abbas meeting, Dayan denied that there is any chance of a trilateral Mubarak-Olmert-Abbas summit. He was interrupted several times during the meeting in an apparent effort to respond to the mistaken view that the Egyptians had on this score.

Humanitarian and Security Assistance

¶6. (C) Dayan maintained that humanitarian assistance had only been discussed in general. Abbas reportedly asked for assistance funding salaries of Fatah officials, but did not request any funding for his office or the security forces. Dayan insisted that Livni had reiterated the GOI's willingness to assist with humanitarian issues. Dayan added that Peres had outlined his package of wide-ranging economic proposals, such as joint industrial parks, coordinated agricultural exports, and reactivation of copper mining in the Negev and Sinai.

¶7. (C) Dayan noted to the Charge that the GOI had been in touch with the EU about the alternate funding mechanism and had told them that Israel would be helpful on humanitarian issues but would not pay salaries for PA officials. He added that the GOI is still examining the legal difficulties of

disbursing NIS 50 million (approximately USD 10.4 million) from the PA's tax revenues for medical purchases. He suggested to the Charge that a letter from Abbas requesting the disbursement might be necessary, considering that the revenues legally belong to the Palestinians.

¶8. (C) According to Dayan, the Egyptians had separately informed Livni that they are willing to transfer weapons and ammunition to Gaza, if necessary. He claimed that the Egyptians are considering closing their side of Rafah, or of limiting movement by certain individuals if the chaos in Gaza continues. Dayan told the Charge that Israel would have less of a problem with ammunition, since the precedent for such a transfer already exists. He was more skeptical about the weapons, cautioning that they could both escalate the already tense situation in Gaza and be used in attacks against Israelis. Dayan said that the ammunition and weapons issues were not discussed during the Livni-Abbas meeting.

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CRETZ